

Con mi lo por skirbi di arte? (Reflexion 2)

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Date: April 2025

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[English below Papiamentu]

Con mi lo por skirbi di arte? (Reflexion 2)

Durante un curso di skirbimento critico di arte, mi a skirbi e articulo aki, incorporando e conseho di e instructor. E tarea tabata pa scohe un articulo cu ta inspira mi y crea un lista di puntonan cu mi ta haya clave den skirbimento critico di arte. E instructor a encurasha pa usa e lista como un forma di expresion creativo.

Como yiu di tera den mundo diasporico, mi tabata desea pa encontra un articulo di skirbiment'i arte relata principalmente cu Aruba. Esaki tabata un reto.

Kisas no tin mucho skirbimento critico di arte relata cu Aruba?
Kisas mi no a descubri esakinan (ainda)?

Sinembargo, mi a corda riba un buki cu mi a lesa algun aña pasá, *Entangled Species. Conversations on Contemporary Art in the Caribbean* (2021), di un escritor hulandes, critico di arte, Sasha Dees. E buki ta explora e existencia y retonan di arte contemporaneo den Caribe. Durante su temporada di investigacion pa e buki, Sasha a publica riba un website na Hulanda varios diario di biahe tocante cada isla Caribense cu el a bishita, incluyendo Aruba, titula *Caribbean Travelogues: Aruba* (2018).¹ Aunke e eror ortografico di skirbi “Caribbean” den e titulo ta trece poco sospecho den mi tocante e articulo y sospecho den e autor mes pa haci un eror asina ki, mi tabata ansioso pa les’e. Na final di dia, hende por haci erornan, no ta berdad? Ata mi lista di locual mi ta haya ta caracteristicanan bon di skirbimento critico di arte~~~~~

uno: situando aruba

Na final di e articulo, ora mi scroll te abou, Sasha a inclui un “background timeline” di Aruba. Esaki ta un lista chronologico di sucesonan historico cu a forma e isla. Mi ta kere esaki tabata mas tanto destina pa lectoran Hulandes di e website, cu kisas no ta conoci cu Aruba—aunke cu Aruba ta un isla Caribense, parti di Reino Hulandes. Of kisas, pa duna informacion general tocante Aruba. Pa scroll bek ariba, na e comienso di e articulo, Sasha ta cuminsa na situa Aruba, pero den un perspectiva antiguo, un fantasia paradisiaco. Fo'i mi experiencia bibando 21 aña na Hulanda y tin e privilegio di biaha den Europa, mi a bin na realisa cu esaki hopi bes ta un proyeccion nostalgico di hopi Europeanonan. Mi sospecho den e articulo ta bolbe spierta, pero inmediatamente Sasha ta interumpi e narativo di e fantasia colonial aki dor di remarca e realidad contemporaneo di Aruba: turismo ta dominando e isla.

dos: relaciona hechonan cu realidadnan contemporaneo

Afortunadamente, Sasha ta cambia e rumbo di su skirbimento pa e rason berdadero cu e ta na Aruba, pues investigando arte contemporaneo. E ta haci preguntanan critico tocante e estado di arte contemporaneo na Aruba y ki rol e surplus financiero di turismo tin. Wel wel wel, esaki ta e tipo di contenido mi tabata busca, e sopi cu mi ta cla pa dop mi pan aden. Banda di comparti un

¹ *Caribbean Travelogues: Aruba* by Sasha Dees, April 2018, <https://africanah.org/caribbean-travelogues-aruba/>

lista di informacion factual tocante diferente institucionnan di arte y e sosten financiero limita pa arte, Sasha continuamente ta relaciona e hechonan aki cu e estado di arte contemporaneo na Aruba den 2018. E acercamento aki ta mantene e articulo dinamico y relevante, en bes di ta djis un compilacion seco di hechonan.

tres: experiencia personal y conscientisacion europeo colonial

Sasha tambe ta comparti su experiencia personal di un bishita na un evento cultural. Aki, e bailadornan a presenta den trahe folklorico pa un publico di turista. E ta describi cu e show tabata consisti di hendenan local den trahenan folklorico colonial, celebrando e temporada colonial. Esaki tabata sinti contradictorio p'e. Aki tambe mi wowonan a cuminsa briya. No pasobra Sasha ta generalisa colonialidad, sin reconoce completamente con restonan colonial inevitablemente a forma nos culturanan creolisa. No, mi wowonan a cuminsa briya paso e ta inclui su propio experiencia reflectivo sin desbalora e cultura. Hopi bes, varios Europeanonan (specialmente e Hulandesnan) tin tendencia di comenta riba tradicionnan Caribense cu un mirada di ignorancia, mientras nan no ta ni culturalmente y ni historicamente informá. Pero Sasha? E ta preveni di cay den e trampa ey cu su *travelogue*. E ta comparti cu “e contradiccion di celebra un temporada colonial den forma di un show di hendenan local di awendia, den bistinan Spaño di colornan primario bailando un Waltz... no ta realmente mi cos.”² Sinembargo, Sasha no ta lag’e te eynan. E ta reconoce e legadonan colonial destructivo di Europa y ta consciente di e combersacionnan descolonial mundial. Den e mesun rosea, e ta puntra su mes si tin espacio na Aruba pa narativonan nobo y con artistanan contemporaneo por contribui na e discusionnan aki. Bon pregunta cu lo por explora na Aruba.

cuater: conscientisacion di tono

Na final di e articulo, Sasha ta bira consciente cu su skirbimento ta bay den direccion di un tono negativo. Cu un cambio di ruta pa un tono mas positivo, e ta destaca e impacto di un curador Arubiano, tempo cu e articulo a ser publica na 2018. E curador tabata gradualmente moviendo combersacionnan den mundo di arte na Aruba pa medio di uso di instalacionnan di video cu ta tecnologicamente moderno den e Museo di Industria na San Nicolas. Tambe e curador tabata duna tarea na artistanan local pa traha arte contemporaneo pa e San Nicolas Community Museum. Sasha ta caba su articulo incluyendo informacion tocante proyectonan den futuro cu lo sigui amplifica e combersacionnan den mundo di arte contemporaneo na Aruba, lagando e lector cu un sentido di posibilidadnan en bes di simplemente criticá.

Skirbi bon por ta difícil—“bon” no ta universal y na mes momento e ta subhetivo. E hecho cu Sasha a inclui su experiencia personal den e articulo sin desbalorisation, ta un reflexion cardinal pa mi mesun skirbimento. Mas ainda mi ta encurasha pa skirbi tocante arte na y relata cu Aruba (hunto cu otro temanan cu mi ta interesa aden). Mi skirbimento ta inspira pa un di mi escritornan favorito, entre otro, Octavia Butler cu tabata haya ‘legria den skirbimento y a la bes a bisa cu “bo mester traha bo mesun mundonan, bo mester skirbi bo mes aden, sea bo tabata parti di e sociedad mas grandi of no, bo mester skirbi bo mes aden. Pues, mi mester a skirbi mi mes aden.”³

² Traduccion di texto pa autor di Ingles pa Papiamentu. Texto original: “*The contradiction of celebrating colonial times performed by present day local people in primary-colored Spanish dresses dancing a Waltz... not really my thing.*”

³ Octavia Butler durante un entrevista cu Charlie Rose den 2000. Traduccion di texto original pa autor. “*Oh, you got to make your own worlds, you got to write yourself in, whether you were a part of the greater society or not, you got to write yourself in. So I got to write myself in.*” <https://charlierose.com/videos/28978>

Skirbí pa Ichmarah Kock
16 april 2025

Fuente:

- Sasha Dees, *Caribbean Travelogues: Aruba*, Africanah, 7 april 2018, <https://africanah.org/caribbean-travelogues-aruba/>
- Charlie Rose, *Octavia Butler*, Charlies Rose, 06 januari 2000, <https://charlierose.com/videos/28978>

[Title translation by author: “How could I write about art?” (Reflection 2)]

During an art critical writing course, I wrote this article, incorporating the instructor’s advice. The task was to choose an article that inspires me and create a list of points that I find key in art critical writing. The instructor encouraged using the list itself as a form of creative expression.

As Aruba’s child of the soil currently in diasporic realms, I wanted to find an article about art writing that is closely related to Aruba. This was a challenge.

*Maybe there aren’t a lot written about Aruba?
Maybe I just haven’t discovered them (yet)?*

I did, however, remember a book I read a few years back, Entangled Species. Conversations on Contemporary Art in the Caribbean (2021), by a Dutch art critic Sasha Dees, about the existence and challenges of contemporary art in the Caribbean. The book explores the existence and challenges of contemporary art in the Caribbean. During her book research, she published several online travelogues about each island she visited, including Aruba, titled: Carabbean Travelogues: Aruba (2018).⁴ Even though the misspelling of “Caribbean” in the title had me side-eyeing both the piece and Sasha herself for such a mistake, I looked forward to read it—after all, people do make mistakes, right?. Here is my list of what I think are characteristics of good art critical writing~~~~~

one: situating aruba

At the end of the article, Sasha included a “background timeline” of Aruba, chronologically listing historical events that have shaped the island. I suspect this was meant for the readers of the Dutch audience of the website, who may not be familiar with Aruba—even though Aruba is a Caribbean island, part of the Dutch Kingdom. Or, maybe Sasha simply shares some general information about Aruba. Scrolling back to the beginning of the article, Sasha starts by situating Aruba within an olden day perceived paradisaical fantasy. From my personal experience having lived in the Netherlands for 21 years and having the privilege to travel around Europe, I realized that this is a nostalgic projection often held by many Europeans. My side-eye muscles twitched again, but she immediately disrupts this colonial daydream by addressing Aruba’s contemporary reality: tourism is overpowering the island.

two: relating facts with contemporary realities

Thankfully, Sasha quickly shifts to the real reason she’s in Aruba: researching contemporary art. She asks critical questions about the state of contemporary art in Aruba and its relation to the financial surplus from tourism. This was the kind of substance I was looking for—the soup I was ready to dip my bread into. Beyond listing factual information about various arts institutions and the limited financial support for the arts, Sasha continuously relates these facts to the state of contemporary art in Aruba in 2018. This approach keeps the article dynamic and relevant, rather than just a dry compilation of facts.

⁴ Caribbean Travelogues: Aruba by Sasha Dees, April 2018, <https://africanah.org/caribbean-travelogues-aruba/>

three: personal experience and european colonial awareness

Sasha also shares her personal experience attending a cultural event where dancers performed in folkloric attire for an audience of tourists. She describes the show as local people in colonial folkloric attire, celebrating colonial times, which felt contradictory to her. This is where my eyes started sparkling again—not because she generalizes coloniality without fully acknowledging how colonial remnants have inevitably shaped Aruba’s creolized cultures, but because she inserts her own reflective experience without degradation. Too often, many Europeans (especially the Dutch) comment on Caribbean traditions with a condescending, historically and culturally uninformed gaze. But Sasha? She avoids that pitfall with her travelogue. She shares that “the contradiction of celebrating colonial times performed by present day local people in primary-colored Spanish dresses dancing a Waltz... not really my thing.” However, she doesn’t leave it at that. Instead, she acknowledges Europe’s destructive colonial legacies and is aware of global decolonial conversations. In the same breath, she asks herself if there is space in Aruba for new narratives and how contemporary artists can contribute to these discussions. A good question that could be explored in Aruba.

four: tone awareness

By the end of the article, Sasha seems aware that her writing is heading towards a negative tone. By rerouting her article on a more positive note, she highlights the impact of an Aruban curator, back in 2018 when the article was published. The curator was gradually stirring conversations through the use of modern technological video installations in the Museum of Industry in San Nicolas. He was also commissioning local contemporary artworks for the San Nicolas Community Museum. Sasha includes information on future projects that will further amplify conversations on contemporary art in Aruba, leaving the reader with a sense of possibility rather than simply the act of critiquing.

Good writing could be difficult—“good” is not universal and at the same time it is subjective. The fact that Sasha included her personal experience in the article and is non-condescending, is a cardinal reflection for my own writing. I am even more encouraged to write about art in, and relating to Aruba (together with other themes I am interested in). My writings is inspired by one of my favorite writers, amongst others, Octavia Butler who found joy in writing and at the same time said that “you got to make your own worlds, you got to write yourself in, whether you were a part of the greater society or not, you got to write yourself in. So I got to write myself in.”⁵

Written by Ichmarah Kock

16 April 2025

Source:

- *Sasha Dees, Caribbean Travelogues: Aruba, Africanah, 7 April 2018, <https://africanah.org/caribbean-travelogues-aruba/>*
- *Charlie Rose, Octavia Butler, Charlies Rose, 06 January 2000, <https://charlierose.com/videos/28978>*

⁵ Octavia Butler during an interview with Charlie Rose in 2000. <https://charlierose.com/videos/28978>